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Proudly representing Eastern Washington in the United States House of Representatives.

### Inside Congress for Week Ending January 18, 2002

Welcome to this week's edition of Inside Congress. I am glad to share with you a little of my work in the national legislature. Please follow the listed links or contact my office for more information on the topics mentioned here.

#### AGRICULTURE EXPO COMES TO SPOKANE

This week I addressed the Spokane Ag Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum. I discussed with the group the measures included in the farm bill passed by the House earlier this year and how they affect the agriculture community. I believe the House bill helps farmers by providing extra security in an already insecure world.

Agriculture is going through a dramatic change as it moves from a local, regional, and national marketing system to a global marketplace. The farm bill passed by the House supports many of the programs essential to continuing a healthy and viable agriculture industry, which is vital for a healthy and viable economy.

American agriculture produces the safest, cheapest and most abundant food supply in the world. The productivity of America's farmers has allowed our citizens to enjoy a lifestyle that is the envy of the world. Supporting our farmers maintains the strength of our domestic agriculture and keeps jobs in the food and fiber industry in the United States. I will continue to fight during the next session of Congress to protect our agriculture community.

#### COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT INFORMATION

I understand that there are concerns and questions surrounding the recent cost-of-living adjustment for Members of Congress. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify the situation.

The Congressional COLA occurs automatically unless the Congress passes legislation to block it. Since I have been in Congress, there have been three direct votes in the House of Representatives on the Congressional COLA, in 1995, 1996, and 1998, and I have voted each time to prohibit the cost-of-living increase. While a vote did occur this year in the Senate, there was no similar vote in the House.

I hope this serves to explain the COLA and how it works.

#### ON THE FLOOR:

There were no votes in the House this week. Votes will resume next week.

#### WALLA WALLA MAN RECEIVES AWARD

This week I was proud to present Vernon W. Carlson of Walla Walla with the Outstanding Older Worker Award for the State of Washington. This award is presented annually by Green Thumb, Inc., a national not-for-profit organization founded in 1965. Mr. Carlson exemplifies the

criteria set forth by Green Thumb for this award. After retiring from his 21 year career as chief plant engineer at the St. Mary's Medical Center, Vernon almost immediately went back to work. He currently works in the boiler plant at the Veterans Administration Medical Center. I congratulate Vernon on this well deserved recognition.

## SCHEDULE

This week I had the pleasure of being home and traveling around eastern Washington. On Monday I met with Joe Buesing, Manager at the Bureau of Land Management, to discuss the BLM exchange program. I met with Bill Meany of Ponderay Newsprint to discuss Box Canyon Dam relicensing. I met with the BPA Administrator and the Spokane Tribal Council to try to help broker an agreement between the two over the impacts to the Tribe associated with construction of the Grand Coulee Dam. I met

with the Executive Director and board members of the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery. I spoke to the students at St. George's School and enjoyed answering their questions about government and local issues. Thanks to Sarah Hulse, my former page, who is a senior at the school, for her assistance in arranging the meeting.

On Tuesday, I attended the Spokane Cardiology meeting and the Community Colleges of Spokane Trustee meeting. My father was one of the original Board Members of the Community Colleges of Washington. I was honored to address this group and discuss the history as well as the future of the Community Colleges of Washington. I spoke at the Spokane Lions Club meeting.

On Wednesday, I addressed the Ag Expo in Spokane. I attended the Boeing rally and toured the plant. I had lunch with Commander Fullhart at Fairchild. I attended the FSA State Community meeting. I was proud to be present at Jim McDevitt's swearing in as the new U.S Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington. I nominated Jim for the position and was pleased to be in attendance for this event. I am confident that Jim will serve us with honor. In the evening, I addressed the Spokane Mortgage Lenders Association and the Washington Association of Mortgage Brokers, eastern Washington Chapter.

On Thursday, I spent the day in Walla Walla and Dayton. I was able to meet and talk with Walla Walla business owners over coffee in the morning. I met with the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin Editorial Board and discussed my views on a wide range of issues. I attended the Walla Walla Rotary Club luncheon and was able to recognize Vernon Carlson as Washington's Outstanding Older Worker of the Year. At age 80, Vernon is the boiler plant operator at the Jonathan Wainwright Veterans Affairs Medical Center. I then attended a summary session of the Walla Walla River Watershed Confluence, a diverse citizen group developing solutions to federal regulatory issues on this bi-state river. I was pleased to hear of their progress toward what may be a National model for watershed cooperation. I sponsored two advisory group meetings, one in Walla Walla County in the morning and another in Columbia County in the afternoon. These were the first of what I hope will be many similar discussions across our District. I was glad to discuss issues with elected officials and local leaders in each area and get their input on how we can work together to better eastern Washington.

On Friday, I was the keynote speaker at the Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce Business Connection Breakfast. I also met with Bill Graedel and Andy Rustemeyer regarding water issues.

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